The Orthodox Herald

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Volume 57, No. 8 ISSUE 676 DECEMBER 2008 www.orthodoxherald.homestead.com

A THREE-DAY FEAST

The feast of the Nativity of Christ is celebrated for three days and is considered one of the greater feast days. St. John Chrysostom called it "the mother of all the feasts."

Not only is the Nativity a three-day feast but it consists of three separate incidents. First, the Birth of Christ, Secondly, the memory of the Three Magi Gospel of the day Matthew 2:1-12, Thirdly, we remember the lowly shepherds who were the first of the Chosen People to hear of the Birth of the awaited Messiah.

Many people are confused when they come to church on December 25/January 7 and hear the gospel about the magi read instead of Matthew 1:18-end, which tells us about His Birth. Since the services honoring His Birth start in the evening of Christmas Day, many readings are taken to this time. The Divine Liturgy on Christmas Day is a continuation of the story.

Who were the three Magi? They learned of the Birth of the Saviour from the stars, acted upon this and led by the star they traveled with gifts to find Him and to worship Him.

According to tradition, they received baptism from Apostle Thomas in Parthia and began to preach Christ as the Messiah.

Archbishop Innocent of Kherson has written: "They represented the whole of mankind: and their gifts – gold, frankincense, and myrrh – symbolically represents all that we can offer to our Saviour. Gold represents material gifts and is offered by those who sacrifice something from their labor: frankincense is offered by those who use the glory of

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FASTING? ANOTHER VIEW

Adam and Eve had been told in Paradise: "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be meat." Genesis 1:29.

In the Orthodox Church this principle is still evident in the requirement for all Orthodox Christians – lay as well as monastics – to totally abstain from meat and certain foods on Wednesdays and Fridays as well as all days in the numerous Lents: the forty days of Great Lent, Nativity, Dormition and Peter and Paul Lents. In the Orthodox Church these days of fasting comprise more than half of the calendar year.

But many of the monastics – and some non-monastics as well – prefer to observe the abstinence all the time. In the Orthodox Church such abstinence is not regarded as penitential self-denial nor "Mortification of the flesh" but rather as an aid to interior prayer (Hesychia - The Silence).

The Holy Fathers of the East taught that diet had a formative influence on the mind – which they saw as a field of energy, not merely the physical brain which they considered to be only the organ of the mind. They observed that some foods made the mental processes (movements of noetic energies) heavy, whereas other foods made the mind light and quick in movement. Topping the list of "heavy foods" were all animal proteins, including dairy. In contrast, vegetables, grains, and fruits – the food of Paradise – as innumerated in Genesis 1:29 were seen to make the mind fluid and better able to grasp

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WHEN WAS HE BORN?

Pinpointing the date of Jesus' birth seems an easy task; however, due to the complexity of history's various calendars and ways of calculating time, we cannot be sure of the time.

The two gospels that detail the birth of Jesus do not give a date. Early Christians observed an annual feast to remember Jesus' death and Resurrection, focusing on the Paschal mystery rather on His death. The Orthodox Church still considers Pascha/His Resurrection as the Holy Day of Holy Days and more important.

As Christianity grew and spread, Christians wanted to celebrate more events from His life. The celebration on December 25 has more to do with expression of faith in Jesus than with establishing the exact date of His birth.

December 25 is listed as the date of Jesus' birth in a 4th century calendar of saints and martyrs, but how this date was chosen is unclear.

Several theories have been put forth. Some scholars believe Christians in Rome chose to counteract the celebration of the sungoddes, Emesa. Others follow the influence of the seasons: Early Christians believed John the Baptist was conceived on the autumnal equinox and born in the summer solstice. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus' conception took place six months after John's. That time would place Jesus' birth at the winter solstice, December 25 on the Julian calendar. A third theory says Jesus' birth would have occurred on the same date as His death, which is believed to be in the spring at Passover.

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THE ORTHODOX HERALD
(USPS 600-140)
(ISSN 0744-1495)
Published monthly by
The Orthodox Herald, Inc.
P.O. Box 9
Hunlock Creek, PA 18621-0009
Periodical Postage Paid at
Hunlock Creek, PA 18621 and at
additional mailing offices
Founders and Editors: V. Rev. W. Basil
Stroyen, Ph.D., D.D. and Nina Bohush
Stroyen, R.N., D.D., D.Litt
Phone 570-256-7232
Annual Subscription: $10 a year
$15 for two years.
Packet Plan Rate on request
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
The Orthodox Herald
P.O. Box 9
Hunlock Creek, PA 18621-0009
Contributions are tax-deductible
Published continually since 1952

News CHRONOLOGY

DECEMBER 2008

DIED: Father Stephen Karaffa in Burr Ridge, IL

Father Basil Slimak in Canton, OH

Matushka Patricia Slimak in Canton, OH

Matushka Lillian Draovich in Burnsville, MI

ST. NICHOLAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, destroyed on 9/11, will move a block away from its original site. The new St. Nicholas Church will be built on top of a subterranean bomb-screening facility. The Port Authority will build a bomb-proof platform under the new church at a cost of an additional $20 to $40 million.

THE OCA'S EXARCHATE OF MEXICO, His Grace, Bishop Alejo has been named Bishop of Mexico City and the Exarchate of Mexico. With his election as ruling bishop, he sits on the Holy Synod of Bishops and becomes a voting member of that body.

THE PATRIARCH OF RUSSIA has proposed a working group to review adding to the calendar the new martyrs and confessors canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia during its separation from the Patriarchate. The working group is entrusted with including these saints into a unified calendar.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF ATHENS AND ALL GREECE IERONYMOS has announced the construction of four socially beneficial foundations: a Care Center for children with a mobility handicap, a Care Center for Autistic Children, a Care Center for the Rehabilitation of Young People from drugs, and a Care Center for Bedridden and Abandoned People.

THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE was addressed by Archbishop of Athens. "For me, personally, separation is not a problem. The distinct roles already exist, a calm discussion is necessary and personally I am not preoccupied with this issue. On the contrary, I think that it will give more possibilities for the Church to develop."

JOSEPH AND MARY WERE NOT ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS NOR WERE THEY HOMELESS. Joseph was of the lineage of David, traveling from his home in Nazareth to Bethlehem to register for the census and pay his taxes. This tells us that Joseph was neither traveling illegally nor was he an immigrant. Matthew 2:23 tells us that after a time, Joseph and his family resided in Nazareth. Tradition has it that Joseph was a carpenter, but whatever his occupation, he had sufficient funds to request a room for himself and Mary when he arrived in Bethlehem.

A MONUMENT, a stele shaped as an open book with depictions of Cyril and Methodius facing north, has been dedicated in Thessaloniki, Greece. The two brothers were born in Thessaloniki in the 9th century and devised the Glagolitic alphabet used in bringing Christianity to the Slav peoples.

SINCE THE REVOLUTION, 18 bells from Danilov Monastery have been in a tower at Harvard University. They have now been returned to Russia and were rung for the first time in the home seat of the Moscow Patriarchate by Russian President Dimitry Medvedev. The bells had been sold as scrap metal by the Soviet government in the 1930s to Charles Crane, an American industrialist. He donated them to Harvard.

AN EMOTIONAL PERFORMANCE OF "Requiem for the Romanovs" was held in the concert hall of Christ the Savior Cathedral in Moscow. Written by Bishop Hilarion (Alfeyev) of Vienna, the concert was woven of contrasting elements of a concert which is a purely cultural event and a religious service with its scriptural readings done by the bishop himself. It was reported "Inside the Vatican" that Bishop Hilarion concluded the performance with these words: "The horror of a national tragedy could not destroy the hope for a breakthrough to light and the inspired certainty that the triumph of evil would be fleeting, and would be followed by a bright future, by growth in spiritual perfection, by restoration and revival. The heroism of the martyrs of the 20th century contains a reflection of the future Kingdom which is transfiguring everyone and everything to live in peace through Christ."

2008 HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS THE YEAR OF ST. PAUL. To mark the occasion, a meeting of the Heads of the Orthodox Churches took place in Constantinople. The meeting included a Symposium, which focused on aspects of the life, the apostolic activity and the teachings of St. Paul as they relate to the contemporary world. Included in the Symposium was a pilgrimage to places connected with the life and work of St. Paul, such as Ephesus, Antalya, Rhodes, Lindos and Kaloi Limenes in Crete.

FRENCH PRESIDENT Nicholas Sarkozy is one-quarter Greek. His Greek-born maternal grandfather was a physician in Thessaloniki.

A RUSSIAN LAW passed in 2008 limits TV commercial time to nine minutes per hour. This has caused ad prices to increase 50%.

(Continued from front page)

A THREE-DAY FEAST

God and the benefit of their neighbor, their talents, knowledge, and skill, which are something that cannot be bought with gold. These are God's gifts to man, but they can and should be man's gift to God. Myrrh, like frankincense, gives a fragrance, but its distinguishing characteristics lies in its extreme bitterness; therefore, it represents our misfortunes, sorrows, tears and suffering. They offer gifts to the Lord who bear misfortunes in life and suffer innocently, without falling into despondency or complaining. This is the most precious gift of all the gifts that we can offer the Lord."

From kings to lowly shepherds all are remembered on this glorious day of the Nativity of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

(Continued from front page)

FASTING? ANOTHER VIEW

the subtleties of spiritual thought and experience (theoria).

(Continued from front page)

WHEN WAS HE BORN?

Regardless of the exact date, we celebrate Jesus Christ as the true Son of God who came to enlighten us and by His death and Resurrection, to give us life everlasting.

NEW HEAD

A new Metropolitan was elected in Pittsburgh, PA on November 12 to lead the Orthodox Church in America (OCA). He had been consecrated only a few months previously as Bishop Jonah of Forth Worth and Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of the South.

Born James Paffhausen in Chicago, IL, he was baptized into the Episcopal faith. He was received into the Orthodox Church in 1978 at the Patriarchal Church in San Diego. He earned a Master of Divinity and a Master of Theology in Dogmatics from St. Vladimir's Seminary and did work toward a PhD at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA.

He left for Russia, where he worked in the Publishing Department of the Patriarchate. He was ordained into the priesthood in 1994 and was tonsured a monk at St. Tikhon's Monastery in So. Cannan, PA in 1995.

He returned to California where he established St. John of Shangai Monastery and many missions in Northern California.

Metropolitan Jonah will be installed by the OCA's Holy Synod of Bishops in St. Nicholas Cathedral in Washington, DC on December 28, 2008.

GIFTS OF THE MAGI LOAF CAKE

1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla extract
2 cups flour
1/2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking soda
1 cup mashed bananas (2 medium)
1 can 11 oz. mandarin oranges, drained
1 cup flaked coconut
1 cup (6 oz.) semi-sweet chocolate chips
2/3 cup sliced almonds, divided
1/2 cup chopped maraschino cherries
1/2 cup chopped dates

In bowl, cream butter and sugar. Beat in eggs and vanilla, combine the flour, baking soda and salt. Add to creamed mixture with mashed bananas, stir in oranges, coconut, chocolate chips and 1/2 cup almonds, cherries and dates.

Pour into greased (2) 8x4x2 loaf pans. Sprinkle with remaining almonds. Bake 350° oven for 50 to 55 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pans on rack to cool completely.

P.S. I made 10 mini loaves from one recipe. Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy new year. Barbara Powell……

(Continued from page 63)

KITCHEN CORNER

minced garlic clove (or as desired). Saute onions until soft. Add. Serve hot or room temperature.

If you wish to be more traditional, dried beans can be used. Soak 1 1/2 cups beans in water to cover overnight. Next day, drain, add water to cover, and simmer until tender. Then proceed as above, adding a bit more onion.

TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY

With the Lord's Cross, salvation was given to mankind; with the Cross, the pagan world was vanquished; with the Cross, after centuries of persecution of Christians, a universal triumph of Christ's faith was made.

Constantine the Great was the cause of this triumph, when he was Emperor of the Greek-Roman Empire. In the year 311, while preparing to fight Maxenty, the ruler of the West, a miraculous sign of the Cross appeared to him in the sky. On it was the inscription: "By this sign you shall conquer." Following this vision, Christ appeared to Constantine with a sign on which the Cross was depicted. Christ directed Constantine to make a banner with the Cross on it and the inscription he had seen in the sky. He was instructed to use it in battle for protection against his enemies. Strengthened by the banner, which led them into battle, Constantine's army defeated the enemy – Maxenty's army.

Two years later in 313, Constantine issued an edict, known as the "Edict of Milan," which stated: "From this time on, everyone who decides to observe the Christian worship, may do so freely and unevasively, without any difficulty."

* * * * * *

When the stomach is full, it is easy to talk of fasting. – St. Jerome

Memories

A memory of mine is enhanced by an old, old photograph – probably 1927 – of my father, my godfather Kresni, and other members of my church. They would come on Christmas Eve carrying a replica of the church extending greetings and singing carols as they went from house to house. I remember not only the thrill of hearing their harmonious voices but also the bolt of fear which shot through me when Old Saint Nick shook his finger at us (I believed he really singled me out) and severely admonished wee ones "Better Be Good!" and then stomped the floor with his staff three times until it shook while I hid trembling behind my mother's long skirts.

My father always strung large colored light bulbs along the front porch while smaller ones were used on the Christmas tree. Even those were quite large compared to the miniature ones used today. Those lights were lit first. Then one by one every window wreath with its electric candle in the center, every overhead light and/or lamps in each room, ALL were switched on and left on while we partook of the Holy Supper. This was awesome in itself because we NEVER left lights on in an unoccupied room. Thriftiness was a necessity.

By lighting up the house both indoors and out we were acknowledging the birth of The Light of the World and at the same time were ensuring that The Christ (as well as Saint Nicholas) would find their way to our well-lit house! Much later when I grew older I joined another group of carolers happily singing and winding our way from street to street to every parishioner awaiting us with open arms and goodies.

Two addresses were never to be forgotten – We were served brewed root beer at one and homemade donuts at another ... what treats to eager carolers! What warm legacies they bestowed upon us! What wonderful memories along with those special ones. Hard times during those depression years existed but we were given valuable lessons of love, life and of spiritual treasures. Who cared that we were poor! We had food, shelter, stability and structure. We were taught respect, reverence and responsibility. The Rs and the Ss. Important letters of the alphabet. We were enriched by obedience to authority, loyalty to family honor (don't bring shame to the family name!) and the value of discipline. Yes, the rigors of skimpy pocketbooks was a given, but we were blessed beyond all measure. We had belief in the birth of The Christ and faith in His and Our Father......We were wealthy indeed!

Anonymous

Please send your MEMORIES to Margaret Pysarchyk, 2125 Garfield St., Lorain OH 44055 or email at mpysarchyk@hotmail.com.

STARRING

In Alaska Orthodox churches the celebration of Christmas is centered more around a star than a Christmas tree. The decorated star is taken from house to house to the icon corner and twirled as the faithful sing Christmas hymns, troparions and carols, proclaiming "Christ is born! Glorify Him!" or the Slavonic greeting, "Christos Rhazdaetsya! Slavite Eho!"

The star is a perfect object for this festive occasion. It's symmetrical, it's glittering, it's portable. More importantly it symbolizes the light that led ancient astrologers (also called wisemen) to the Christ-child in Bethlehem.

Like the wisemen, the faithful come to worship the newborn King, the true God, abandoning false gods. Says the troparion of the Nativity feast: For by it (the Nativity of Christ) those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to adore Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, And to know Thee, the Orient from on high."

Starring is so rooted in Alaska Orthodox culture that some assume that this tradition is synonymous with Orthodoxy. But really its practice is pretty sparse amongst Orthodox parishes throughout the United States. It's a Ukrainian custom that was brought to Alaska at turn of the 19th century by Orthodox clergy.

Another unique feature about Alaskan Orthodoxy (as well as some of the Orthodox parishes in the lower 48) is that the faithful celebrate the Nativity early in the new year. The reason for this disparity is that the church goes by the Julian calendar when celebrating church feast days. The Julian calendar differs from the widely used Gregorian calendar by about two weeks.

The Nativity is also a time for a variety of services in the Orthodox Church. The birth of Christ is anticipated in the service of Royal Hours, which takes place in the morning. On the following morning, at the same time, a Divine Liturgy is scheduled. Then the vigil for the Nativity of our Lord. The birth of Christ will be celebrated at Divine Liturgy and the Nativity vespers. After the star is blessed, the choir will lead in the singing of traditional Eastern and Western Christmas carols. The star will be first taken to the home of the priest and his family, and then to the Alutiiq Museum. Starring will continue the next few nights.

FUNDS

MISSION – Tammy Faight, Teresa Potopchuk, Rosalia Peters in memory of sister Frances (Ephoparyna) Mongdes

ALASKA – Father and Matushka Logan, Teresa Potopchuk, Ethel Watlock

BOTH MISSION AND ALASKA – Elizabeth Casper, Kathy Kolarsky, Marge Cimbolic

POSTAGE – Father and Matushka Vladimir Lecko, Marge Cimbolic, Apollo and Elizabeth Manchuk, Eleanor Boshko, George and Helen Yurchak, Elizabeth Casper, Theodore Demchak, Kathy Kolarsky, Sophie Nahorniak, Irene Sulick, Patty Hill, Protection Monastery (Weaverville, NC), Mr. and Mrs. William Cook, Marie Cardone, Teresa Potopchuk

WHO ARE THE FOREFATHERS?

The two Sundays preceding Christmas are preparatory Sundays for the Nativity of Christ. On the Sunday before Christmas we remember the ancestors of Christ, those who appear in the genealogy of Christ as reported in the Gospels. Two Sundays before Christmas we remember the Old Testament patriarchs, prophets, and righteous men and women – the Forefathers of our Christian faith. Some persons, such as Abraham and David, are remembered on the first as well as the second Sunday before Christmas.

Both of these Sundays accent the theme of preparation: how God worked great signs and wonders through special witnesses preparing for the sending of His Son to the world according to His perfect plan. THESE RIGHTEOUS MAN AND WOMEN RESPONDED TO THE CALL OF GOD, SERVED HIM WITH DEVOTION, AND MANY OF THEM FERVENTLY ANTICIPATED THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH. As we remember them during the two Sundays before Christmas, we, too, seek to respond to God's call to us, to lift up our hearts in thankful prayer to Him for His promises and to expectantly prepare for the celebration of the coming of Christ into our lives.

Who are the Forefathers? According to the hymns of the Feastday of the Forefathers, the following persons are mentioned:

1. persons of the earliest biblical period - Adam, Abel, Seth, Noah, Enoch, and others;
2. the Patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons known as the Twelve Patriarchs;
3. women such as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Miriam, Deborah, Esther, Ruth, Judith, and others;
4. all the prophets such as Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, Malachi, and others down to John the Baptist;
5. special figures in the Old Testament such as Melchizedek, Job, David and others;
6. the three young men - Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego - rescued by God from Nebuchadnezzar's blazing furnace.

In many of the hymns of the Orthodox Church the courageous example of the three young men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, is celebrated. They refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar's image and were cast into fire. However, the presence of the Angel of God, Whom the Church Fathers recognized as the eternal Christ working in the Old Testament, preserved them safe from the fire. In Orthodox tradition the three young men surrounded in the fire by divine light represent the mystery of the Holy Trinity and also prefigure the presence of Christ in the Virgin's womb because "the fire of divinity consumed not the Virgin's womb into which it had descended" (Christmas Matin Hymn).

THE LIFE OF ST. HERMAN

Our holy Father among the Saints Herman of Alaska was born in 1760 near Moscow. At age 16, he left for the Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Hermitage near St. Petersburg where he became a monk and where he was granted a miraculous healing from a near fatal ailment after praying before the icon of the Mother of God. After spending six years at Saint Sergius Hermitage, he departed for Valaam Monastery, where he received as his spiritual guide the renowned Igumen Nazarii, who had been called from Sarov Monastery to Valaam.

With the blessing of the Holy Synod, Metropolitan Gabriel gave the Elder Nazarii the task of selecting capable persons from Valaam Monastery for a missionary endeavor to North America. Ten were selected, including St. Herman (and St. Juvenaly), departing from Valaam Monastery in 1793. As a result of the holy zeal of the preachers, the light of the Gospel quickly poured out among the sons of Russia, and several thousand native Alaskans received baptism.

Nevertheless, the mission was looked upon by many in the Church as unsatisfactory and soon one mishap after another took their course, beginning first with the martyrdom of St. Juvenaly, followed by the death of the newly-consecrated Bishop of Alaska, Josaph, who was drowned in a ship wreck at sea with all his party. Soon, one by one, the original party of this first missionary group disappeared, one after another, leaving only St. Herman to labor alone on Spruce Island for many years.

Wearing the same clothes winter and summer, St. Herman was a strict ascetic who ate and slept little. A small bench served for his bed, two bricks for his pillows and he used a wooden board which he called his 'blanket.' St. Herman labored tirelessly among the natives, taking care of them in times of famine, and protecting and defending them from those who would sought to exploit them. St. Herman especially loved the children and would make large quantities of biscuits and cookies for them. He eventually built a school for the native Alaskan orphan children, teaching them the Law of God and about the Church's services and music. He gathered all the Aleuts on Sundays and Feast Days to his cell to read the hours, the Gospels, and to preach to and sing with all who had gathered (it is said by many accounts that he loved to sing and had an extremely beautiful voice).

The Elder's teachings, his labors, his countless miracles, and his amazing prophesies and ascetic life all proclaim St. Herman's great sanctity and the great boldness he obtained before God. In the 81st year of his life on December 13th/26, 1837 the blessed Holy Elder fell asleep in the Lord on Spruce Island. He was officially canonized by the Orthodox Church in America on August 9th, 1970. (A brief summary taken from the book *Service to Saint Herman.* OCA. 1970).

LIGHTER MOMENT

BY THE TIME you make ends meet, they move the ends.

WINTER'S GRACE

During the holiday season
There's a question often asked of me,
"What do you want for Christmas;
What would you like under the tree?"
If I were still a child
I'd quickly reply
A doll or a train or Wii
But that time in my life
Has long since passed,
And the gifts I want now
Are treasures that last
Not just through the holiday season,
But all the year through –
Being helpful and kind to each other,
Being Christ-like in all that we do.
What gifts do I want for Christmas?
The gifts Jesus brought with His birth –
Love in each heart, joy in each soul,
And, most of all, peace on earth!

THE CHRISTMAS TREE

German settlers introduced the idea of a decorated tree to Slovakia and parts of Carpatho-Rus in the early 1800s. It quickly became a central part of community festivals and in a short time spread to inns, schools, orphanages and hospitals. Gradually, the Christmas tree penetrated into the peasant environment spreading from the western part of the area towards the east.

On one hand, the Christmas tree reflected a mythical concept – a symbol of life and prosperity. On the other hand, the tree also had a Christian symbolic meaning, which presented it as the Paradise Tree of Adam and Eve – the tree of good and evil.

Initially, the ornaments were made from materials at hand such as straw and paper, candles, nuts, honey cookies, and multi-colored ribbons and scraps of paper. Apples were hung on the tree to symbolize man's first sin and separation from God. Still popular in the eastern part of Slovakia are "jezulanky," which are wrapped chocolate and other candy which are a reminder of the temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The most important decoration is not the tree but under it – the Bethlehem or Nativity set. Simple paper ones can be bought at Christmas Fairs popular in Europe. More complicated ones are made by local woodcarvers. Many of these are of great beauty and value as this area is rich with woodcarvers with an abundant supply of materials.

Traditionally, the tree is not decorated prior to Christmas Eve. It is left up until the house is blessed on Epiphany. The fruit and candy decorations on the tree are left untouched until then.

GOD IS WITH US
S'Nami Boh

Give ear, you lands afar off:
Submit yourselves, you mighty ones:
For if you rise up again, so again will you be crushed:
And if any take counsel together, the Lord will destroy them:
And if you make resolutions, they will not stand:
For we fear not what you fear, nor are we troubled:
Sanctify the Lord our God, let Him be your dread:
And He will be your sanctification, for whomever trusts in Him:
We will hope in Him, and through Him be saved:
Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me:
The people that walked in the darkness have seen a great Light:
A Light will shine on you who dwell in the shadow of death:
For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given:
And the government will be upon His shoulder:
And His name will be called the great Council of Angels:
Wonderful Counselor:
The Mighty God, the Ruler, the Prince of Peace:
The Everlasting Father:
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and forever. Amen.

Undique (from everywhere)

It's amazing how much we take God's grace for granted. Because holiness can be difficult, we default to simply admitting we're miserable sinners, get our grace, and then go on with living our lives the way we were going to live them anyway. Have you ever thought about how good you are at detaching God from your day-to-day life?

God has been pushed out of many homes and replaced by the unholy trinity of greed, power and sex. Religion is no longer practiced in many homes because parents are too busy with their careers or pursuing their own hobbies or "thing" to bother with prayers, fasts, or church attendance. If God and His Church are not important to the parents, why should they be to the children?

The Uzhorod Union of 1646 was an agreement between 63 priests of the Orthodox Church in Carpatho-Russia and the Roman See, when they left the Orthodox Church and joined the Roman Catholic Church. As a result of this Union, many people in this area were brought into communion with Rome and permitted to retain most of their traditions, particularly the services in their own language and a married priesthood. The terms of Union had been worked out at the Council of Florence in 1439 and the Council of Brest in 1595. They were signed in the chapel of the fortress at Uzhorod, which is located near the Ukraine-Slovak border.

Google's Russian-born co-founder Sergei Brin has said the company is working to improve Russian language search technology.

Pelagria, a nun, is an amateur detective in a series of mystery books by best-selling author Boris Akunin. Some are available in English.

Editor's Notes

At the Transfiguration of our Lord, St. Peter said to Jesus; "Lord, it is good for us to be here..." Peter was so filled with the splendor of the occasion that he did not want it to end and to have to return to the humdrum of everyday life.



I felt the same way when it was time to return home from the OCA Council, which was held in Pittsburgh in November. Hearing a thousand voices sing: "O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thy inheritance..."; proclaiming "Axios" at the selection of the new Metropolitan; attending the services with the excellent choral responses; listening to the sacred readings; and participating in the fellowship made it hard to leave.

I must commend the committee who planned the Council in such a short time and all those who attended and exhibited Christian behaviour in trying to find solutions for the acute problems under discussion.

This was the first time that I have been fortunate and privileged to attend a Council of the church. For many years, I was not eligible to attend, even as an observer, as women were not allowed. Perhaps another change should be considered – that is the process for selecting a metropolitan. At the present time, going into the deliberation, all the delegates are not informed as to the backgrounds of those under consideration or of their vision for the church. In this age of technology we could see how the system could be vitiated.

I desperately miss the yearly directories. Consideration should be given to printing one. Costs could be cut by it being less repetitive with the goal of giving only necessary information and not as a vehicle to impress.

Please excuse the delay in receiving your November and December issues of the paper. A glitch in the mailing process delayed the November issue, which was sitting in the system for several weeks. This created a disruption of the schedule.

At this poignant time when we pause to say "Christ is borne" and we reply "Glorify Him," may we reflect upon God's Greatest Gift to us – His Son. I wish God's promise of peace for you.

Christos Razdayetsa.

Matushka Nina

PRESS FUNDS

How can I thank thee? Let me count the ways. I have taken the liberty of changing some of the words in a well memorized verse. How can I? Writing Spasebo/thank you for helping seems so inadequate.

Patty Hill, C. Morgan, Teresa Potopchuk, George Sebastian, Ethel Anne Dorozynski, Dorothy Shakun, Tillie Theckla Porter, Vera Hershey, Andrew Fitzgerald, Marge Cimbolic, Steve Mallick, Mary Arndt, Elizabeth Howe, Mary Stiteler, Anonymous (2), George and Helen Yurchak, John Kucirka, Phillip Chomiak, Paul Brenia, Elizabeth Casper, Mary Bohurjak, Kathy Kolarsky, Irene Allen, Vera Hubiak, Shirley Young, Olga Stefero, Walter Palchik, Ann Senica, Helen Beily

*Ann Smolak in memory of Patricia Smolak, Fr. A. Woronovich, Fr. Basil Stroyen, and for health of Matushka Nina

*Vera Utterbach in memory of husband Vasily and for health of her daughter Barbara and her family

*Stevan Silianoff in memory of Steve Milosh Klipa

*Rick Sedlar in memory of his father Richard Sedlar

*Simon and Mary Herbert in memory of Matushka Maryann Bohush

*Charles R. Smith for health of Edward and Irene Rhenish and in memory of John Rhenish and Fr. Basil Stroyen

*Linda Smith in thanksgiving for all blessings and for health of family and friends

*Eva Melnyk for health of Larissa Shepard, who had surgery, and for all her loved ones

*Matushka Nina for health of Joanne, Betty and Marge



This year I will give you several more recipes of foods served at the traditional Christmas Eve Supper. The recipe for the Lenten Perogi has been requested many times during the past year.

LENTEN PEROGI

Dough:

Pkg. of dry yeast	4 cups flour
1/2 cup warm water	salt

Mix yeast with water. When bubbling, add the salt and flour. Knead, adding either more flour or water. Let rise. Roll out. Cut into 2 or 3 inch squares. Put a tablespoon of filling into the center of the squares. Pinch edges well. Either boil, fry in deep oil or bake in an oven. Serve lavishly topped with onions sauteed in oil.

Fillings:

Sauerkraut

1/3 cup chopped onion

1 Tbls. oil

1 1/2 cups sauerkraut, rinsed and drained

Stir-fry onion in oil for few minutes. Add sauerkraut and cook few minutes.

To make potato filling. Boil potatoes. Mash, adding salt and pepper and sauteed onions. (No milk or cheese.)

To make prune filling. Boil prunes, add sugar and cinnamon if desired.

To make fresh cabbage filling. Saute finely chopped cabbage and onion. Add salt and pepper. These are hard to pinch, so some cooks add a bit of mashed potato to make more compact balls of filling.

MASHED BEANS

can of white beans	1/2 onion
clove garlic	1 tsp. oil

Drain. Mash beans, adding some of drained water, if necessary. Add

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Христосъ раждаетсѧ! Славите его!



HAIL! Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee O Virgin Theotokos. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, for thou hast borne the Savior of our souls.

Home Bible Reading Schedule

DECEMBER 2008

1. 2 Thess 1:11-10 Philaret
2. 2 Thess 1:10-2:2 Cyril
3. 2 Thess 2:1-12 Angelo
4. Galatians 3:23-29 Barbara
5. 2 Thess 3:6-18 Diogenes
6. Hebrews 13:17-21 Nicholas
7. **Ephes 4:1-7 Ambrose**
8. 1 Tim 1:1-7 Patapy
9. Gal 4:22-31 Hanna
10. 1 Tim 1:18-20 Hermogene
11. 1 Tim 3:1-13 Daniel
12. Hebrews 13:17-21 Lucia
13. Gal 3:8-12 Callinicos
14. **Col 3:4-11 Philemon**
15. 1 Tim 5:1-10 Susannah
16. 1 Tim 5:11-21 Modestos
17. 1 Tim 5:22-6:11 Daniel
18. 1 Tim 6:17-21 Sebastian
19. 2 Tim 1:1-2, 8-18 Boniface
20. Gal 3:8-12 Ignaty
21. **Hebrews 11:9-10,17-23,32-40 Julianna**
22. 2 Tim 2:20-16 Anastasia
23. 2 Tim 3:16-4:4 Niphon
24. Hebrews 1:1-12 Eugenia
25. Gal 4:4-7 Jonah
26. Hebrews 2:11-18 Euthemios
27. Acts 6:8-15, 6:8-7:5,47-60 Theodore
28. **Gal 1:11-19 Domna**
29. Hebrews 3:5-11,17-19 Marcellus
30. Hebrews 4:1-13 Anysia
31. Hebrews 5:11-6:8 Melanie

BIBLE STUDY

For centuries we have been praying for the cathechumens during the Divine Liturgy. And God has answered our prayers! Many are being received into the Orthodox Church. "Unite them unto Thy Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and number them with Thy chosen flock."

Cathechumens are taught by catechists whose noble work it is to pass on the faith. It is an honorable endeavor and just takes a little time and concern on the part of the catechist, but we know that in some parts of the world where Christians have been and are persecuted for their faith, catechists are targets. They are literally witnesses, martyrs, for the faith.

A cathechumen wanted a recommendation for a book to read on religion. It was recommended that he read either the gospel from Matthew or Luke. This is where to "encounter the living Christ."

There are different ways to read. You can read to analyze, for information, to catch the highlights, to pass a test, to justify oneself, or to win an argument. A priest encouraged me to read the Gospel of Matthew straight through to find how Jesus lived and what he taught and how He died. Have you ever sat down and read Matthew or Luke through just like you would read a favorite novel or an article in a magazine? Try it this month. The gospels are not very long, nor will you find them difficult reading. You must be warned, it can be life-changing to encounter Jesus in this way. It will make you want to know more, and if you're honest, it makes you want to live differently.

After you read the Gospel, find someone with whom you can talk about it. In other words, you should find a catechist, someone whom you'd like to imitate. And keep praying for the cathechumens!